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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000465

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SUBJECT: USAU: AFRICAN UNION TO REVIEW AMISOM MANDATE IN
WAKE OF FATAL ATTACK

REF: NAIROBI 346

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) Summary: In the wake of a double suicide bombing against an AMISOM base in Mogadishu, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council has ordered an "urgent reassessment" of AMISOM's mandate. The Council also appealed to the UN to accelerate implementation of a support package for AMISOM, and it reiterated its call on AU member states to provide troops to AMISOM. A review of AMISOM's security procedures is under way, but the AU wants urgent U.S. intelligence assistance to begin, with more requests to follow. As explained in reftel, the suicide bombers were Somali nationals known to the Burundian troops and with regular access to the base. End Summary.

12. (U) Following the February 22 attack against Burundian troops belonging to AMISOM, the AU's response has been swift and strong. AU Chairperson Jean Ping issued a press statement condemning in the strongest terms "these criminal and cowardly attacks." For its part, the AU Peace and Security Council held an emergency meeting on February 23 and issued a communique expressing "outrage at this despicable and heinous act perpetrated by extremist elements seeking to undermine the ongoing efforts towards peace, security and reconciliation in Somalia, whose only response to the plight of their people is more violence and destruction. Council strongly condemned this terrorist act and demanded that appropriate measures be taken to identify and bring to justice the authors of this attack."

13. (C) In addition, the Council ordered an "urgent reassessment" of AMISOM's mandate and a "multiform reinforcement of the capacity of AMISOM to enable it to adapt to the conditions on the ground and the new modus operandi of terrorist groups." One of the PermReps who attended the meeting told USAU that better intelligence might have thwarted the attack. The AU is expected to ask for urgent intelligence assistance from the U.S., UK, and France, with more requests to follow. (Note: AMISOM Force Commander Major General Francis Okello had warned the AU and the international community back in December that the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia would leave the AU without adequate intelligence about the different groups that might want to target AMISOM. End Note.)

14. (U) When the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1744 authorizing AMISOM in February 2007, AMISOM's mandate was "to take all measures, as appropriate, to carry out support for dialogue and reconciliation by assisting with the free

movement, safe passage and protection of all those involved in a national reconciliation congress involving all stakeholders." The mandate also included the provision of protection to the Transitional Federal Institutions and security for key infrastructure; assistance with the implementation of the National Security and Stabilization Plan; contribution to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance; and protection of its personnel and facilities, as well as ensuring the security and freedom of movement of its personnel.

15. (C) In the latest communique, the AU Peace and Security Council appealed to the UN to speed up implementation of a support package for AMISOM, in conformity with UNSCR 1863, and it repeated its call on AU member states to provide troops to AMISOM. The Nigerian PermRep was specifically asked about his country's pledge to send a battalion to Somalia, but he said nothing. Burundi's PermRep reaffirmed her country's commitment to AMISOM and vowed not to withdraw. Burundi is due to rotate out one of its two battalions in the coming days with the help of an Algerian airlift. As part of an AU agreement with Algeria, the Algerians will also airlift two Burundian battalions and one Ugandan battalion. That will bring the total number of battalions to six.

16. (C) AMISOM's mandate is set to expire in mid-March. Peace and Security Council Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra told AU partner countries on February 18 that he expected the Council would vote for a renewal of AMISOM's mandate by the first week of March. The reassessment of AMISOM's mandate and

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recommendations for improved security procedures could be tabled by then as well.

17. (C) COMMENT: Even if AMISOM was fully deployed per its original mandate (the six battalions that should be on the ground by the end of this month are three short of the nine envisioned when the Mission's original mandate was authorized), it presumably would not be able to fulfill the more robust role that the Peace and Security Council is now considering. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO